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LEGAL LIABILITY FOR TRANSMITTING INFECTION

Personal responsibility for the transmission of venereal disease has now been upheld in several different phases by both civil and criminal courts, according to the U. S. Public Health Service. In Oklahoma a man has been sentenced to five years in the penitentiary for infecting a girl with syphilis. In Nebraska the court upheld a doctor who warned a hotel keeper that one of his patients, a guest at the hotel, had syphilis and had refused treatment, and was consequently a menace to the public health. In North Carolina a woman has been awarded \$10,000 damages against her husband for a similar infection, and the Supreme Court has upheld the judgment.

The Nebraska case is important because it asserts that a physician's duty to protect the public health may, under certain circumstances, transcend his duty to hold his patient's confidence inviolable. The North Carolina case is also important, because it sets aside in this particular case the legal barrier that prevents a wife from testifying against her husband and bringing suit against him.

All three cases are valuable in counteracting incorrect statements, often made, that the venereal disease law falls almost exclusively on women and lets men go free. State laws, of course, govern in all such cases, but the fact that every State in the Union has now adopted many, if not all, of the venereal disease laws, gives ground for expecting similar action in other States. Certainly, the wide dissemination of the three decisions should go far to curb diseased persons who deliberately expose others to infection.

The fact that the North Carolina decision makes it likely that marriage will henceforth be no adequate defense against a suit for transmitting infection will probably hasten the adoption by the States of laws requiring every applicant for a marriage license to present a certificate by a reputable doctor, certifying that he is free from venereal disease, and providing that without this no license shall be issued.

Twenty States have already adopted laws forbidding persons with venereal disease to marry, seven of these—New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia—having acted during the present year's sessions. A similar bill is now pending in Florida.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS *

By DR. JOHN C. YATES, San Diego.

Members of the Medical Society of the State of California:

The Society has discontinued the former custom of having the Mayor and other dignitaries bid you welcome to the city in which the meeting was to be held, and has used the time for the newly created general section, dealing with matters of common interest to all members. It was thought that our meetings were becoming too highly specialized for the general practitioners, who represent the vast majority of our membership, to receive the greatest benefit from the sessions. It happens that your president is a resident here, and on behalf of the San Diego County Medical Society and the citizens of Coronado and San Diego, I wish to welcome you to our city, and hope you can all remain longer than required by the Society meeting, to enjoy our climate and amusements in this care-free land, far away from the strife and struggle of your cities. You can have golfing, tennis, boating, swimming, all the year round. Again, I bid you welcome. While I still claim the honor of being your first probation-prohibition president, I will not attempt the Invocation.

The past year, the fiftieth of our existence, has been a very eventful one in the annals of our Society, and this meeting, which is our Golden Jubilee, is very appropriately held in San Diego, the birthplace of California. As you will hear from the secretary's report, our Society has increased 327 members, and from the treasurer's report, you will note that we now have, to date, \$22,765.47 on hand, and we had a surplus account at the beginning of the year of \$11,870.78. Formerly the years have closed with a deficit, requiring the giving of our note to carry us until dues came in. But even more gratifying than the condition of material prosperity shown by these reports, the election of November 2 last, and the campaign which preceded it, showed that our profession, through that remarkably efficient organization, The League for the Conservation of the Public Health, is really a factor to be reckoned with in the affairs of our great state.

Some years ago when our Society was small in numbers, it was customary for the president to address you upon some new idea or ideal of organized medicine, the progress of medical science during the preceding year, or some subject germane to the practice of medicine. Then our president was elected by reason of his eminence in scientific work; but now our Society has grown to such large proportions that the sections are individually greater than was the old Society, and in the addresses of the chairmen of the various sections, and papers by the members, you get what is new in scientific medicine, so that I feel I may be pardoned if I digress from the customary presidential address of the days when our Society met as a unit, and take up a few of the stubborn facts that present themselves today from other

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